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Bedouins MJ4

Badawin Love Affairs

Chap. VIII

RIGHTS OF IBN 'AM

If a girl refuses to be wedded to her *ibn 'am*, he may slay her without becoming liable to pay blood money in compensation.

If the *ibn 'am* knows that his cousin does not want him, being already in love with someone else, he can forbid (*kajyyir 'alaiha*) the marriage, and the girl may die a spinster.

If a girl loves another and her father dies, she has a chance of getting her freedom from her *ibn 'am* who is *kajyyiring* her ("hajjir" is the correct technical term for keeping her to himself), if she goes and begs her freedom immediately after her father's death: "My father has died, I want thee to release me in return for my father who has passed away", she says. In such case the *hajjir* is expected to be generous and release her—but he is not bound to do so. If he refuses her only remedy is to elope. She then flees with her lover to a distant land or tribe, and there marries him after putting herself and her husband under the protection of a shaikh. She remains in constant danger from her cousin, however. Her husband is considered as guilty as a murderer and can only secure his life by the payment of blood money.

Should a Badawin elope with and marry a "white slave girl" (e.g. Circassian, Georgian or Armenian) or a girl of inferior tribe (he can on no account marry a slave and defile the tribe's blood), he can never return again to his kin; they will kill him.

It is the duty of every Badawin to marry and procreate. The more children he possesses, the more powerful his kinsmen. He would be expelled the tribe were he to refuse to do his duty in this respect. Without his kin a Badawin would be the most miserable of outcasts. Musil brings this out clearly in his book, *Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouins*.

There are, of course, cases where a man sees a girl, not his cousin, and falls madly in love with her. If she herself is not bound to her *ibn 'am* a regular courtship follows, the man finding opportunity of meeting when she is looking after the camels or the sheep, much as our own youths and maidens do. I have known very violent love affairs of this type, and the Badawin loses his head over his lass quite as much as the ordinary English youth, if not more.